

1974

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VARIETY

TELEVISION REVIEWS

39

WINNING STREAK

With Bill Cullen, Don Pardo
Supplier: Bob Stewart Prods.
Exec Producer: Stewart
Producer: Bruce Burneister
Director: Mike Gargiulo
30 Mins., Mon.-Fri., 10:30 a.m.
NBC-TV

NBC-TV debuted two of the three new game shows with which it will henceforth open its daytime sked — the third, "Name That Tune," does not preem until July 29.

"Winning Streak," the new occupant of the 10:30-11 a.m. weekday slot, has an opening teaser announcement that "Streak" contestants can win as much as \$100,000 or nothing — thereby establishing a greed motif as the series' drawing gimmick — but the first day's unspooling didn't particularly clarify how that huge chunk of boodle could be achieved. Smoothly emceed by Bill Cullen, the initialer's activities progressed swiftly through a series of two-contestant faceoffs on a combination of word game and quiz answer testings that culminated in a two-winner playoff (for better than \$1,000), leaving the emergent winner ready to take on a new challenger as the half-hour ended.

Without the prospect of a huge potential payoff, the game portion of the show impressed as rather unchallenging content. Cullen's presence is always a plus and the pacing tends to create a sense of urgency and tension to the game-playing, but overall "Winning Streak" seems undistinguishable from other daytime gamers where the amount of boodle within the contestant's grasp is the big consideration. — *Bok.*

HIGH ROLLERS

With Alex Trebek, Ruta Lee
Supplier: Heatter-Quigley Prods.
Exec Producer: Bob Noah
Producers: Art Alisi, Ken Williams
Director: Jerome Shaw
30 Mins., Mon.-Fri., 11 a.m.
NBC-TV

NBC-TV's second new daytime game show, "High Rollers," is another gimmicked boodle dispenser wherein contestants can make as much as \$10,000 by guessing right on a dice-rolling proposition.

With Alex Trebek as emcee and Ruta Lee as hostess (which casts her as the dice roller), the opening show generally was inane in what it had to offer the viewer in terms of entertainment or identification. Guessing right or wrong on which way dice will roll requires no more of a contestant than a voice and it's hard to see how the skein will develop much of a viewer habit with nothing more than that to snare a regular audience. — *Bok.*

SEVEN SEAS

With Bruno Vailati, Norman Corwin (narrators)
Supplier: Four Star International
Exec Producer: Norman S. Powell
Producer-Director: Vailati
Writers: Corwin, Michael Tor, Vailati
60 Mins., Sun. (30), 5 p.m.
WABC-TV New York

WABC-TV has bowed the seven-part "Seven Seas" series as Sunday afternoon programming. The preem show, "Atlantic Ocean," contained segments of varying length about activities on land and sea of countries and islands that surround that body of water.

Included in the generally interesting footage, narrated by Bruno Vailati and Norman Corwin, were such oddities as skyfishing in Iceland, sardine fishing off Morocco, penguins gambling on ice-free Cape of Good Hope and Tierra del Fuego, and an exploratory dive to explore the sunken Andrea Doria off Nantucket Shoals. Underwater footage was topnotch — it's Vailati's specialty. — *Bok.*

GOOD EVENING, GOOD MORNING

With James McCord, Gloria Steinem, Godfrey Cambridge, Anne Murray, Teddy Wilson Trio, Sesame Street's Big Bird, Red Sox's Carlton Fisk and Bill Lee, John Willis, Janet Langhart, co-hosts

Producer: Bruce Marson
Director: Robert Loudin
Writer-Producer: Betty B. Levin
90 Mins., Thurs. (20), 7 p.m.
WCVB-TV Boston (live)

This high rated "Good Morning" show, which sprang into No. 1 spot in a short time in the competitive a.m. talkshow field, and goes regional network throughout New England in the fall, doing its first special in primetime, must be doing something right. And this first special is a good view of what they are doing right. From the outset, it's noticeable that the show, produced live, has an unmistakable charm and sense of relaxation about it — seemingly uncontrived and as American New England as apple pie and cheese.

Co-hosts John Willis and Janet Langhart make a splendid interviewing team, gliding effortlessly along the twists and turns of gab their guests spout. This show was extra special because associate producer Terry Ann Knopf bagged James McCord who was saved for the finale. The convicted Watergate burglar repeated charges that President Nixon knew and sanctioned the coverup, plugged his book, "A Piece of Tape: The Watergate Story, Fact and Fiction." Willis handled McCord and the Red Sox battery with equal dispatch.

Langhart, a brunette looker with a mellow honey-syruped voice that seems to hypnotize her guests into relaxed conversation and makes them behave, introed Anne Murray in songs, cut up with her and Sesame Street's Big Bird celebrating her birthday with a cake, and femme libber Gloria Steinem who has been overexposed on tv talkshows, and have been easily eliminated as she had nothing new to offer on the movement. "You self destruct at age 50" she said.

Godfrey Cambridge did some funny stuff with Sesame Street's "Grouch," and showed a film clip from his fall special with Robert Hooks on ABC, "Ceremonies In Dark Old Men." Teddy Wilson appeared in a remote from the Merry Go Round room in the Copley Plaza, doing jazz classic "Rose Room" with his trio. That's another thing: This show does live remotes from nightclubs, theatres, parks, which add dimension.

All in all, a slick arrival on the Boston scene, and more of these primetime shows are skedded for the rest of the summer. — *Guy.*

Rich Now In ABC Family For Sitcom & TV Movies

John Rich, producer-director of CBS-TV's "All in the Family" for the past two seasons, has been signed to a "long-range" ABC Entertainment contract to develop and produce a sitcom series pilot and to produce and direct movies for tv. Rich, who directed "All in the Family" for the first two of its four years, was an Emmy winner for a Dick Van Dyke directorial stint and has worked on tv dramas and westerns, as well as sitcoms.

WNEW-TV's Fem V.P.

Muriel Henle Reis has been named veepee and special administrative assistant to the general manager of WNEW-TV New York.

A former assistant secretary of ABC, she will continue as assistant general counsel and assistant secretary of Metromedia Inc., WNEW-TV's parent company.

TV Followup

The Reasoner Report

ABC co-anchor Harry Reasoner bridged the segments of his weekly half-hour show from Moscow, but he needn't have. The segments were all taped before he went abroad, though ABC News publicity said Reasoner, accompanying President Nixon on his summit rounds, would give "on-the-scene first impressions of the Soviet capital and its people" during the course of the show. Impressions apparently are going to wait until next Saturday at 6:30 p.m.

The first of three minidocs in the show provided a sober background to Moscow, however. Columbia U. Soviet expert Zbigniew Brzezinski gave a calm explanation of what could and could not be expected of current summitry, warning of the pitfalls faced by a politically weak President in dealing with the Kremlin. The segment was produced by George Merlis.

London bureau chief George Watson produced and reported the second report, a look at the Soviet satellite state of Poland, tracing liberalization of life there following a workers' strike in 1970. The rock music Catholic mass in particular underlined the segment's apparent point that life in Poland may be less haunted by authoritarianism than Americans imagine.

The concluding bit by Reasoner on the use and abuse of the U.S. flag was produced by Margaret Osmer and made a nice prelude to July 4 celebrations, with Reasoner scolding those who appropriate the flag to promote their own views. — *Mick.*

'Knight' Goes To Series; Lorimar Silent On Web

Lorimar Productions is prepping Joseph Wambaugh's "The Blue Knight" as a regular tv series for January airing, with George Kennedy starring and Wambaugh as production consultant. Lorimar made the four-part miniseries of the same name, adapted from Wambaugh's bestseller. It aired on NBC-TV last season with William Holden topcast.

The production company is being coy about which network the new series will play, a spokesman saying only that all three webs are vying for the property.

Houston — Chuck Dunaway, local radio personality most recently with KILT, joins KIKX Tucson.

VIDEO MAGAZINE

With LaMarr Renee (host), Nick Ashford, Valerie Simpson, Helen Martin, Zalda Coles, Raymond League, Byron Lewis
Supplier: Dimensions Unlimited
Exec Producer-Director: Fred L. Dukes

Producers: William Easley, Christopher J. Brough
30 Mins., Sun. (23), 8:30 p.m.
WPIX-TV New York

Dimensions Unlimited's "Video Magazine" half-hour special was the pilot for a weekly series that WPIX-TV reportedly has committed itself to carry come September.

The magazine motif was projected via "Page One, Page Two" graphics as each segment unspooled. Content of the pilot was 100% black ethnic subjects, but DU production people have stated that a wider base is planned when the series begins to air regularly. No matter, the segments had viewer appeal beyond purely ethnic considerations. Songwriter-performers Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson explained their technique for song composition before doing a couple of good tunes. Then cast and production toppers of "Sounds of the City," the first nationally syndicated black soap opera, discussed various aspects of the venture. The third segment was a "preview" film clip of the late Diana Sands' last movie, "Honey Baby." Final "page" was a salute to black pace-setters whose current activities qualify them for inclusion.

The half-hour was crisply edited and fast-paced, with LaMarr Renee functioning as hostess and continuity bridge between segments. Renee's presence was a little rigid on camera, but she articulates and interviews well and should loosen up a bit facially as the series progresses. Horace Donnell's musical direction contributed fresh and interesting background scores that were a definite asset. — *Bok.*

Severine To FM Sales For ABC; Lochridge Veeped

Louis Severine has been named director of American FM Radio Sales for ABC Radio, one of the four radio networks operated by the company. He will be replaced as general manager of WPLJ-FM, ABC Radio's New York o&o, by Willard Lochridge who will also be a v.p.

Severine headed WPLJ for four years after starting with WABC radio as an account exec. Lochridge was general manager of ABC's Detroit o&o, WRIF-FM, for three years.

SOLZHENITSYN

With Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Walter Cronkite, David Floyd
Producer: Burton Benjamin
60 Mins., Mon. (24), 10-11 p.m.
CBS-TV

The most remarkable thing about this first-in-depth interview with Alexander Solzhenitsyn, exiled in February from the Soviet Union, was the translation provided his statements by David Floyd of the London Daily Telegraph. There were times during the hour show when it seemed that the interviewee was actually speaking in English and the emphasis Floyd provided on the spoken words seemed a perfect match to the physical gestures Solzhenitsyn made.

Aside from pointing out the skill of the translator and the vigor of the subject's personality, there was nothing to distinguish the interview from a radio show. It was talking heads all the way, with little material that would have called for illustrative shots. And it was to the credit of CBS News that little was inserted.

Biggest goof in planning may have been the selection of Walter Cronkite as interviewer. It would seem that a past or present Moscow correspondent would have been better suited for the job, but the demands of audience appeal (and other internal CBS News demands, one suspects) made it imperative to assign a "star." It was reminiscent of President Nixon's China trip, when not one network newsmen who accompanied him spoke Chinese.

Solzhenitsyn's comments on Soviet life were difficult to assay without specialized knowledge of that closed society. But his comments on the Western press were interesting. He properly bewailed the pressure he and his family were subjected to upon his arrival in Western Europe and suggested that the press place greater restraint upon itself in dealing with people, suggesting that in the demand for news, it seemed to overstep the bounds of decent conduct. Even more interesting was his comparison between press behavior in the West and that in Russia or China (with "one or two remarkable exceptions"), where, he said, they cringe before the most minor state official.

Oddly, although Floyd's translation made it clearly the "Western" press Solzhenitsyn was referring to, Cronkite turned it into "American" press in a followup question. That may have been a result of editing (one hour and 40 minutes of interview were compressed into 60 minutes) or Cronkite's own reaction to the criticism he's come in for through the years.

At the end, it seemed that the whole arrangement for this first interview may have been a fund-raising ploy. The writer said that royalties from "The Gulag Archipelago" would go to a fund to help dissident writers and artists still in Russia and unable to make a living. He suggested that "perhaps other people will make contributions."

Much of the writer's comments about the West drew on the knowledge he had of it while in Russia. While he undoubtedly had better contacts there than most of his fellow citizens, he had not examined the society in person and must have drawn on his experience as a Russian raised under Stalin and his successors — albeit with his special artist's perception. It will be interesting if, and when, he again speaks out on the West and Russia after he's been in the free world for a couple of years. — *F.W.*

Charleston, S.C. — Donald W. Hatcher has joined news staff of WCBD-TV here. He was formerly with WALB-TV Albany, Ga.

Inside Stuff-Radio-TV

The opening of ABC Scenic and Wildlife Attractions' latest centre, The Wildlife Preserve in Largo, Md., has been pushed back from July 1 to July 15. Debut of the 280-acre park has been slowed, according to John E. Campbell, president of S&W, by delays in building power equipment and by bad weather.

Broadcasters from the AM side will be welcome to this year's convention of the National Assn. of FM Broadcasters in New Orleans, Oct. 10-13. According to president John Richer, the open NAFMB meeting will touch on problems common to all radio station operators, hence the dual invite.

CBS Inc. has established a full-tuition scholarship, plus full salary and benefits, for a woman employee to attend a new graduate-level course called the "Graduate Program in Management" at Boston's Simmons College. The course leads to a Master of Arts degree in management, and is open to CBS employees with a bachelor's degree or, lacking a college diploma, women who have demonstrated managerial abilities. The Simmons program is designed to combine exec business management training with special insights into the roles and opportunities for women in management, and the CBS scholarship is part of a planned expansion by CBS of educational opportunities for women and minority group members, which already includes participation in programs at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford, Columbia and Harvard.

Variety (June 19) incorrectly identified the Miss American Teenager Pageant, scheduled to be aired via ABC-TV on Sept. 11, as the Miss Teenage America Pageant. The latter contest will be telecast on CBS from Little Rock, Ark.